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UK COVID-19 Lockdown 18-60 Experiences

Preliminary Results

Results based on a nationwide sample of
916 cisgender heterosexual people aged
18-60 from across the UK.

Data collected between 18/11/2020 and
18/01/2021

31 May 2021

**Sinead Archer, Marie Houghton &
Fiona Tasker**



UK COVID-19 Lockdown 18-60 Experiences

Preliminary Results

Thanks for taking a look at this summary of the preliminary results from our UK COVID-19 Lockdown 18-60 Experiences survey, conducted between November 2020 and January 2021. In this report we present a short preliminary summary of the responses of the 916 cisgender heterosexual people who replied to our invitation to participate in a nationwide survey.

We have released a parallel report on the results from our UK COVID-19 Lockdown 18-60 Experiences survey for LGBTQ+ respondents on our website lgbtq1835c19lockdown.wordpress.com

This is one of a series of surveys and interview studies that we have planned in our international research project on adults' experiences of the coronavirus pandemic and associated restrictions. We hope you will find the results interesting and useful.

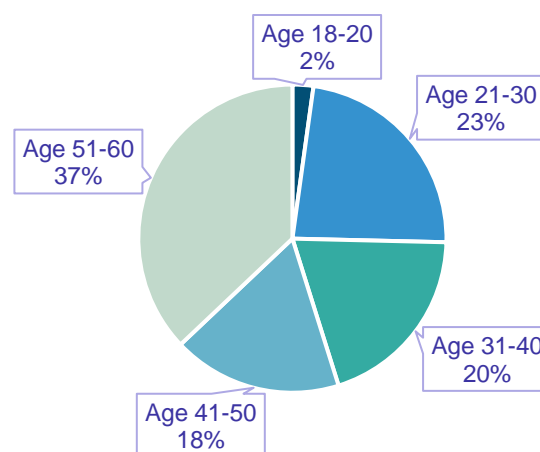
If you have any questions, would like to know more about the results, or would like to quote any of the material here, please do get in touch with the main Research Team at Birkbeck University of London – Fiona Tasker (f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk) and Marie Houghton (mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk).



Who took part in the survey?

Gender and Sexual Identity. Of the 916 participants identifying as cisgender and heterosexual: 75% of participants identified as female, 24% identified as male and 1% preferred not to say. In our parallel survey, we had 515 LGBTQ* people, see lgbtq1835c19lockdown.wordpress.com

Age. The largest group of participants were those aged 51-60 (37%) and just 2% were aged 18-20. However, the rest of the participants were fairly evenly spread across the 21-30, 31-40, and 41-50 age groups.



Disability. 30% of those who took part in the survey considered themselves as disabled or had an ongoing physical or mental health problem. Of these participants, a large majority (96%) said that their disability or ongoing mental or physical health problem affected their daily life to some extent.

Ethnicity. As 89.5% of participants identified themselves as white in the survey, BAME groups were under-represented in this survey.

Nationality. 91% of participants were British citizens.

Region and area of the UK. All participants were based in the UK and the survey had respondents from every region of the UK. The South East and Greater London combined had the greatest proportion of participants (27% combined), although this does reflect general population density in this area. Areas with underrepresentation included Northern Ireland (1%), Scotland (3%) and North East England (3%)

Personal experience of COVID-19

Ten percent of survey participants said that currently tested positive for Covid-19 or at some point previously had received a positive diagnosis for the condition (9.5% of survey respondents). This is aligned with ONS estimates of the proportion of the UK population who will have tested positive for Covid-19 antibodies in December 2020¹ which ranged between 12.1% in England and 7.8% in Northern Ireland. However, a further 9.5% of our survey recipients said they had experienced some Covid-19 symptoms but had not been diagnosed.



Impact of the pandemic

When asked to what extent the pandemic had affected their life in the last 3 weeks, with 0 being 'it has not affected my life at all' and 10 indicating 'it has severely affected my life', 95% of participants said the pandemic had affected their life in some way. The average score to this question was 7, indicating that life had been highly affected for the majority of participants, with 24% saying their life was severely affected.

The emotional effects of the pandemic appear to be felt deeply too, with 29% of participants giving the highest rating to the question 'During the last 3 weeks, to what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you emotionally?'

¹

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/coronaviruscovid19infectionsinthecommunityinengland/antibodydatafortheukjanuary2021>

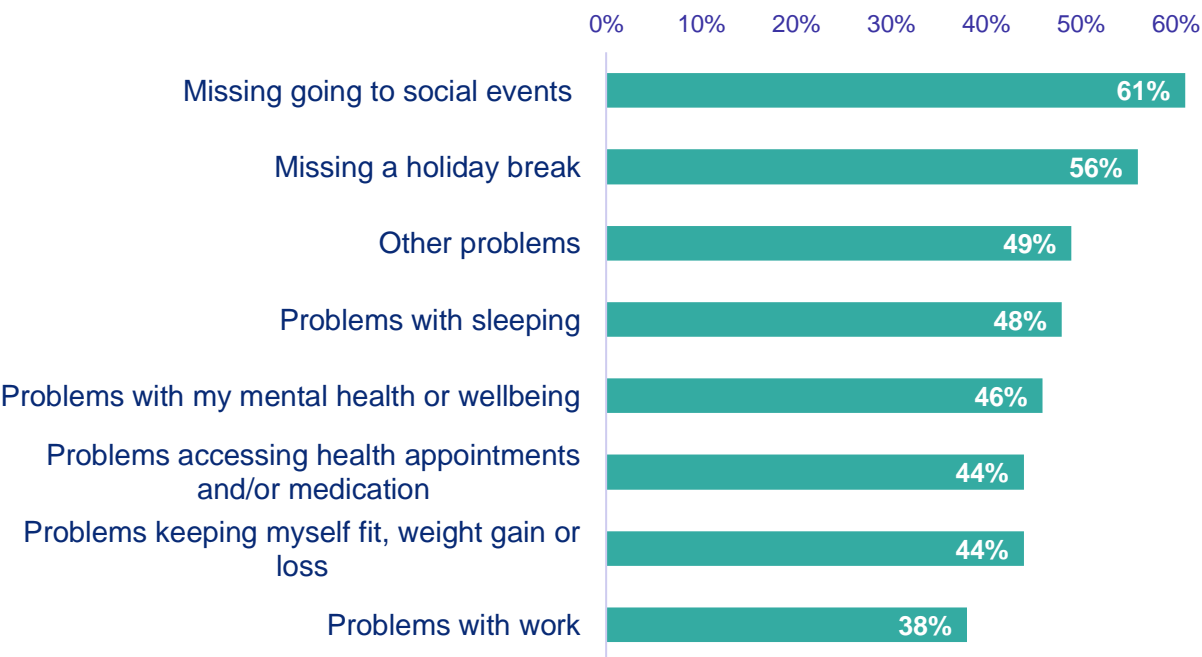
Problems caused by the Pandemic

The impact of the pandemic was felt through a variety of problems, but some were felt more acutely than others. Over half the respondents said that missing going to social events (61%) or missing a holiday break (56%) had been a big or a fairly big problem for them.

We also found that a sizeable proportion of people had experienced a high level of difficulties with disruption to their psychological health and wellbeing: 46% of respondents reported that their mental health had been a big or a fairly big problem to them during the pandemic. Also, nearly half of all respondents reported sleep as being a big or a fairly big problem for them (48%) and over 40% identified fitness or weight gain or loss as a big or a fairly big problem for them. Problems accessing health care services or medication was similarly a big or fairly big problem for over 40% of people in the survey.

Pandemic problems experienced by over a third of respondents

% of people who identified item as a big or fairly big problem during the pandemic



Benefits of the pandemic

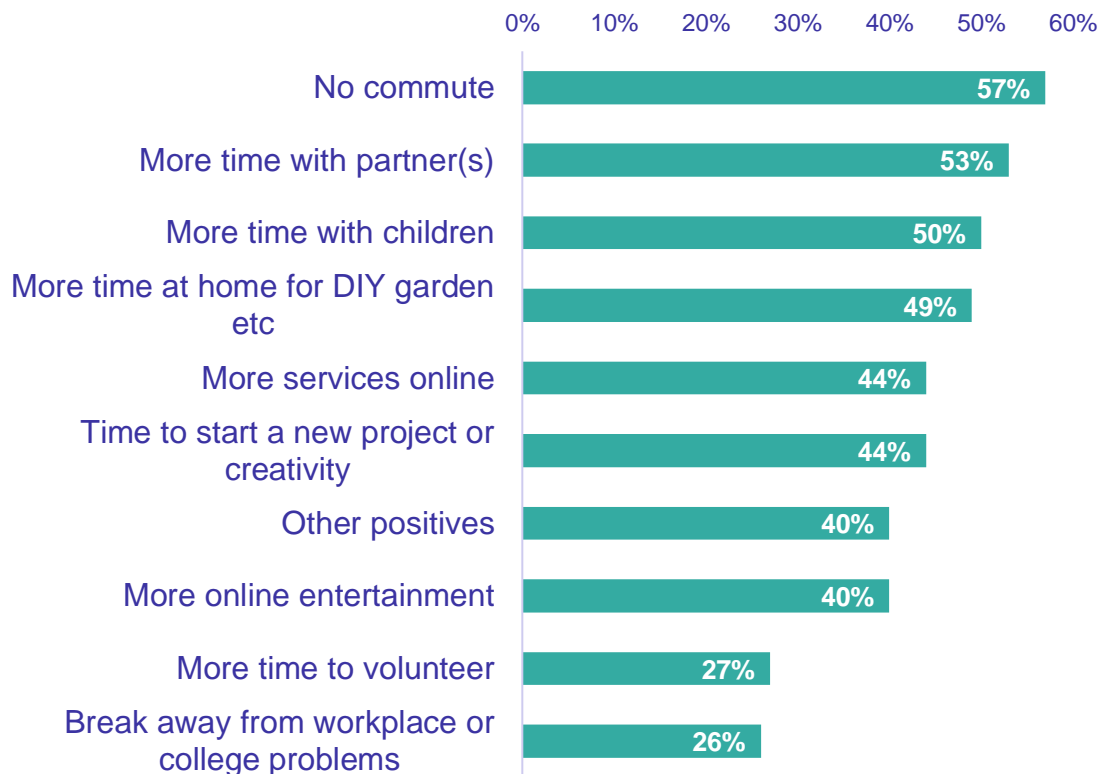
Despite the many problems experienced by participants, some did find positives from the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 60% of respondents identified not having to commute as a big or fairly big plus in relation to the pandemic and lockdown measures, while just over a quarter of respondents reported big or fairly big gains from having a break away from work or college problems.

Just over half of all respondents also identified positive benefits from having more time to spend with their partner(s) and/or children.

Respondents also identified gains from the increased availability of online services and entertainment (over 40% of respondents). And a similar positive gain was noted in terms of increased creativity or starting a new project (over 40% of respondents). Just over a quarter of people reported a gain from having more time to volunteer.

The 10 most frequently identified pandemic positives

% of people who identified item as a big or fairly big positive during the pandemic



The effects of the pandemic in participants' own words

We asked participants to describe the effects of the pandemic in their own words, and we think these provide a powerful illustration of the wide-ranging impacts that lockdown and other restrictions have had on people's lives.

The difficulties and problems experienced by some participants during the pandemic were severe:

"This was undoubtedly the worst time of my entire life"

"I lost both my parents early in lockdown due to covid. It has been hard grieving for them and not being able to see family and friends during this time"

"Feel isolated and lonely, bored and anxious"

"I feel like I'm socially withdrawing because it's hard trying to keep in contact with people who you can't see"

However, some participants also spoke about positives that had come out of lockdown, with some really valuing being able to work from home:

"I enjoy working from home and am exercising more"

"More time to spend outdoors and be active without being at work"

"Have time to take online courses"

"Realizing what is important in life and being able to enjoy a slower pace to it"

Conclusions

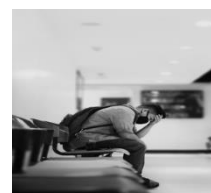
We hope that you have found this summary of our initial findings useful. Our results highlight the many and varied experiences across the UK at this time.



Missing social events and a chance of a holiday break were rated as big problems by over half of our respondents, perhaps indicating the inaccessibility of usual patterns of relaxation for many of our survey respondents. And for some the high rates of problems around mental health and well-being are concerning.

However, while our survey highlighted problems during the pandemic, it also highlighted the positive gains from changing patterns for many, particularly around non-commuting working lifestyles, increased online opportunities, more time at home with partners and children, and time to enjoy taking on new projects and activities.

We continue to explore our data to examine the balance of problems and pluses from pandemic times among different groups of people.



Thank you and future research

Firstly, we would like to offer our thanks to everyone who participated in the survey. We are so grateful for the time and thought you put into taking part.

We are grateful to all the organizations who helped in publicizing the survey and to those who offered feedback on the draft of the survey. We would also like to thank the British Academy and Birkbeck, University of London for the funding which have made our series of surveys possible. And we want to thank our team of undergraduate and postgraduate students for their energetic and enthusiastic help with our survey research projects.

We plan to explore associations within our findings further to find out more about both the problems and benefits that people living in the UK have experienced. We have a future survey, as well as an interview study, planned.

For more information about our research project, the results we have found so far and our future plans, do please visit our websites:

yourcovid19experiences.wordpress.com and
lgbtq1835c19lockdown.wordpress.com

Please do get in touch with us – Fiona Tasker (f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk) and Marie Houghton (mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk) – if you have any questions, would like to know more about the results, or would like to quote any of the material here.

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LGBTQ* UK COVID-19 Lockdown Researching Young Adult Experiences
Vulnerability and Resilience Over Time